

Attitude of Physical Therapy Students towards People with Disability

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Author's Contribution

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Background: Attitudes are essential factors inducing interactions between healthcare providers and their patients. In the context of physical therapy, understanding students' attitudes towards individuals with disabilities is of great importance for providing effective and empathetic care. The term disability means person with any physical, sensory, intellectual, hearing and visual dysfunction or impairment that affects social, economic and environmental participation.

Objective: The objective of this study was to find out the attitude of physical therapy students towards disabled people.

Methodology: A cross-sectional survey was conducted to examine the attitudes of 100 physical therapy students towards individuals with disabilities. Participants were selected using a non-probability convenient sampling technique. This approach was chosen for its practicality and accessibility. The survey utilized the "Attitude towards Disabled Person" scale as the primary tool for data collection. Data was collected through the administration of the questionnaire to participants who met the predefined inclusion criteria. These criteria were established to ensure that the sample accurately represented the target population of interest.

Results: Among the 100 participants, a significant 23% expressed strong agreement with the idea that individuals with disabilities are inherently more sensitive, while 58% simply agreed. The results were remarkably in favor about the sensitivity of disabled people. When asked about the social interaction of disabled people, 3% Physical therapists strongly agreed and 12% agreed that these people are sociable. On the other hand 7% strongly disagreed and 34% disagreed that people with disability are not much sociable. The results concluded that 12% strongly disagreed and 31% disagreed to the asked question that the person with disability cannot be discouraged easily. Majority of the participants think that it's easy to discourage a person with disability. 21% students are strongly agreed and 46% agreed that disabled people should communicate with other people of society. Overall results of this study show that physical therapy students had negative attitude i.e. 72% and average of positive attitude variables is 67%.

with Trans tibial amputation

Key Words: Trans-tibial Amputation, Stump Length, Gait Parameters, Kinetics, Temporo Spatial, Below Knee Amputees.

A B S T R A C T

Introduction

Positive and negative feeling of a person towards surrounding situation known as attitude, an evaluation of a person, object or event can also be done in positive and negative manner that affects the performance towards the goal. Students of doctor of physical therapy program generally

represent positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and there were no difference in attitudes determined in 1st and 3rd year doctoral physical therapy students.¹

People with disability are very much degraded in the society. Negative attitudes from health care providers, teachers, co-workers, friends, and students can pose significant

challenges for individuals with disabilities. Until these barriers are removed, true acceptance and integration of people with disabilities may remain elusive. These prejudiced views can hinder them from fulfilling their roles and achieving their aspirations in life.²

There could be direct influence of attitude of professional in health care. Generally due to the attitude of healthcare professional can find out the feeling and progression or improvement of disabled person during rehabilitation program.³ Health care professionals' attitudes towards individuals with disabilities can significantly affect the quality of medical and rehabilitation services. If physiotherapists possess misconceptions about disability or lack sufficient experience and knowledge in managing disabilities, it can have a detrimental impact on the standard of care delivered to individuals with disabilities. Physiotherapists hold a pivotal role in shaping the focus and trajectory of rehabilitation services, making their attitudes a crucial factor in determining the quality of such services.³

The possibility for treatment and rehabilitation of patients who have disabilities is substantially impacted by the health specialists who work with them. The goals of rehabilitation, which aim to improve patients' independence and quality of life, might sometimes face obstacles due to the restrictive perspectives held by healthcare practitioners. These attitudes are partially a result of an ignorance of how the disabled feel and attempts to separate oneself from the suffering of sufferers. Regardless of the extent of the disability, the negative attitudes of health care workers can prevent patients from adapting to and accepting their condition and restrict the growth of a positive staff culture.⁴

Access to healthcare services is hampered most severely by the attitudes and actions of healthcare professionals, according to people with disabilities. The care that a patient receives may be impacted by the healthcare professionals' negative views about patients with impairments. Despite the fact that these attitudes and beliefs are typically not overtly unpleasant, they could hinder people with disabilities from receiving the necessary treatment or wellness programs.⁵

According to a study on the professional as well as private attitudes of physiotherapy students towards people with disabilities, fourth-year students' professional attitudes were much more positive than their personal attitudes, as evaluated by the ATDP scale. The ability to separate professional from personal attitude was thus seen in senior physiotherapy students.⁶

Kenyan students exhibit less positive attitudes towards disability than the rest of the population, according to a

study on the factors that impact attitudes towards disability and occupational policy issues across undergraduate students. Age, marital status, educational focus, type of enrollment, socioeconomic status, place of birth, and area of current residence were seven independent variables included in this study that were associated with the dependent variables (i.e., general attitudes towards disability as well as several items regarding attitudes towards organizational policies and procedures for employees with disabilities). Gender, degree of enrolment, employment affiliation, perceived understanding of disability, prior encounter with impairment, and self-knowledge of disability law were six additional variables that were irrelevant to the study's dependent variables.⁷

The conclusion of one study suggests that on preparing health professionals to provide care to disabled person there should be more awareness in education on clinical side as well in medical and dental students at graduate level. The attention shown by professional educators to develop an effective programs that may provide chance to make newly graduate students more concerned towards the people with disability.⁸

Nurses and physiotherapists play key roles in the healthcare team, as they have to directly interact with the patients. Also, the personal experiences of students studying these disciplines can significantly work on their attitudes towards patients. Given these factors, the primary aim of this study was to assess the attitudes of nursing and physiotherapy students at the University of Cadiz towards individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the specific objectives included comparing attitudes between students from both disciplines, examining how attitudes change across different academic years, identifying associated influencing factors, and determining if the type of disability had an impact on students' attitudes.⁹

According to a study comparing the attitudes of physiotherapy and occupational therapy students towards individuals with disabilities, first-year students in the various courses exhibited substantial attitudes towards persons with disabilities at the start of their respective programs but not at the end. The most pessimistic attitudes were displayed by physiotherapists early in their training, yet these attitudes improved as they neared graduation. The most upbeat attitudes were displayed by occupational therapy students at the beginning and end of their courses. The more interaction students had with people with disabilities, the happier they were.¹⁰

According to a study on the views of medical students regarding individuals with disabilities, the students generally

held a neutral to unfavorable opinion of people with disabilities. Regarding their interactions with people with disabilities, just 17.6% of students said that people with disabilities had visited them at home, compared to 26.9% of participants who said they had a lengthy conversation with someone with a disability.¹¹

In one study it is further concluded that the student's attitude towards disabled people that learned could be increased on campus through an integrated curriculum program.¹²

According to a study on Chinese rehabilitation and business students' views towards individuals with disabilities, the rehabilitation students displayed a greater number of positive attitudes at the completion of the first year, but the business students had significantly more negative attitudes. These attitudes persisted among both groups of students in the third year. It went on to say that rehabilitation psychologists should broaden their scope of work to encourage positive attitude changes in students enrolled in non-rehabilitation programs, since this contributes to the development of a supportive environment for persons with disabilities.¹³

Methodology

In this study, a cross-sectional survey was conducted using a non-probability convenient sampling technique. The sample size consisted of 100 physical therapy students who were selected for participation. The primary instrument for collecting data was the 'Attitude towards Disabled Person' scale, administered through a questionnaire.

The sample size of 100 participants was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator, which takes into account the desired confidence level, margin of error, and estimated population size. This calculation helped ensure that the survey results would be statistically significant and representative of the larger population.

This research methodology was employed to gain insights into the attitudes of physical therapy students towards disabled individuals, with the hope of contributing to a better understanding of how healthcare professionals perceive and interact with this demographic. The study aimed to provide valuable insights that could inform educational programs and policies in the field of physical therapy."

Results

The provided data shows the attitudes of physical therapy students, categorized into three age groups (25 years and below, 26-35 years, and 36-45 years) with a gender split of 28% males and 72% females. These students were surveyed

on their attitudes toward disabled people. Here is an overview of the key findings:

Table I: Demographic Data of the participants	
Age in years	Percent
18-20 year	53%
21-23 year	38%
Above 23 year	9%
Gender	
Male	28% (28)
Female	72% (72)

Positive Attitudes towards Disabled People:

Emotional Perception: 83% of the surveyed physical therapy students agreed that disabled individuals are more emotional.

Self-Consciousness: 78% of students believed that disabled individuals are more self-conscious.

Friendliness: 64% of respondents felt that disabled individuals are often unfriendly.

Sociability: 59% of students perceived that disabled individuals are usually sociable.

Job Participation: 48% of respondents thought that individuals with disabilities tend to avoid participating in jobs compared to the normal population.

Equality: 74% of students acknowledged that disabled persons are as capable as other people.

Negative Attitudes towards Disability:

High Expectations: 44% of the surveyed students agreed that they should expect more from disabled individuals.

Sympathy: In contrast, 70% of students agreed that disabled individuals don't need sympathy.

Interest: 84% believed that disabled persons show as much interest as the normal population.

Sensitivity: 92% agreed that individuals with any disability are more sensitive than normal individuals.

Tidiness: 66% of students agreed that individuals with severe disabilities tend to be untidy.

These findings provide valuable insights into the attitudes and perceptions of physical therapy students towards disabled individuals across different age groups and gender. It's essential to consider these attitudes in the context of education, training, and future interactions between healthcare professionals and individuals with disabilities.

Hence results showed that physical therapy students revealed more negative attitude towards people with disability that is 72% than the positive attitude i.e. 67% that address challenging negative attitudes while reinforcing positive ones can contribute to more inclusive and empathetic healthcare practices.

Table II: Positive Attitude towards people with disability		
Variable	Agree	Disagree
Disabled people are more emotional than other people.	83%(83)	17%(17)
Most disabled persons are more self-conscious than other people	78%(78)	22%(22)
Disabled people are often unfriendly	64%(64)	36%(36)
Disable people are usually sociable	59%(59)	41%(41)
Disabled people should not have to compete for jobs with physically normal people	48%(48)	52%(52)
Most disabled people feel that they are as good as other people	74%(74)	26%(26)
Total (%)	67.66	32.33%

Table III: Negative Attitude towards people with disability		
Variable	Agree	Disagree
We should expect just as much from disable as from nondisabled persons	44%	56%
Disabled persons don't want any more sympathy than other people	70%	30%
Most nondisabled people would not want to marry anyone who is physically disabled	76%	24%
Disabled people show as much enthusiasm as other people	84%	16%
Disabled persons are usually more sensitive than other people	92%	8%
Severely disabled persons are usually untidy	66%	34%
Total (%)	72%	28%

Discussion

According to Petronila Oliva Ruiz, et al; Students who had no exposure to individuals with disabilities during their early academic years, or whose first experience with disability involved individuals with mental disabilities, tend to exhibit more negative attitudes same as in our study physical therapy students show more negative attitude. ⁹

This study provides great knowledge regarding the attitude of physiotherapist towards disabled people, when interacting and treating disabled people. The results of our study showed that majority of the students agreed upon that disabled individuals are more emotional, more self-conscious, often unfriendly, usually social, often tries to avoid participating in jobs and most of them also agreed upon that these people are equally capable as normal people are. In contrast, they also believed that one should expect more from a disabled person, they don't need sympathy, shows interest in everything as a

normal person shows, tends to be more sensitive and individuals with severe disability often tends to appear untidy. In a study conducted in Nigeria responses to the 30 items on the ATDP-A were analyzed item by item, and the results indicated that the majority of respondents had negative opinions of the emotional aspects of people with disabilities' personalities. However, the only factors that led to statistically significant variations in opinions were the students' ages and their universities of study; older students reported more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.¹ Another study was conducted in Peshawar in which total of 262 students took part in this study; of these, 115 (43.9%) had a good attitude towards disabilities, while the remaining 147 (56.1%) had a negative view. Since the replies to all the questions were on a Likert scale, the totaled scores, and those with scores below 50% were deemed to have a negative attitude, while those with scores over 50% were deemed to have a good attitude and the above given study also supports our study.¹⁴ Physical therapists have a positive outlook on both professional and non-professional individuals with disabilities. The majority is growing in the field of physical therapy. They are embracing them as a natural part of the environment. Education is essential in refining students' perspectives on individuals with disabilities of all kinds. Students studying nursing demonstrate kindness towards individuals with physical disabilities. The primary reason for their optimistic outlook could be that each of them has a relative who is disabled in some way. ¹⁵

In the field of orthotics and prosthetics, the majority of students, approximately 80%, exhibit a positive attitude towards individuals with disabilities. Conversely, about 11% of students show a somewhat negative attitude, often attributed to their limited interactions with patients in this specific context.¹⁷ The opposite results found in our study mostly students of physical therapy had negative attitude towards people with disability according to the results of this study.

There was a study carried out in Faisalabad. Positive attitude outweighs negative attitude among the 50 physiotherapists in the population. According to the ATDP questionnaire, which consists of 20 questions with response options (agree being a positive attitude and disagree being a negative attitude), physical therapists generally have a more positive attitude towards people with disabilities. The more positive an attitude towards people with disabilities, the more likely it is that they will feel comfortable taking on challenging rehabilitation.¹⁶ The study found that disabled people are not encouraged by society and face challenges in various fields of work due to their differing thinking levels. Teachers should teach them better ethics and encourage them to work as much as possible, but they must also be dedicated and hardworking.

The majority of participants had positive attitudes towards disabled people, while the minority had negative attitudes. Physical therapy students showed more satisfaction with them and need more care than the normal population without disabilities.¹³ The findings made it very evident that physical therapists have no obligation to treat persons with disabilities with dignity and kindness. If anyone is going to be critical of physiotherapists, it will be the disabled community, as they are perceived as being more emotional and sensitive.

Conclusion

It has been concluded from the study that majority of the physical therapy students shown negative attitude towards people with disability because of lack of understanding and awareness. However, more participants revealed negative attitude because of the irritating nature of the disabled people as most of them don't co-operative with them. Physical therapy students are much aware but there is a need to create awareness in disable people to face challenging environment and their adjustment. There is a need to create awareness to show positive attitude towards disability.

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